

Farmlands and Forest Preservation Category

- Single funding category (unless \$10 million or more available)
- Separate funding criteria have been developed for agricultural and forestal lands
- Applicant should use the set of criteria that is most appropriate for projects being submitted
- Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

Farmlands Criteria

- Soil quality is a major determining factor (25 points)
- Parcel will be ranked based on the percentage that it contains of each of the following soils:
 1. “Prime farmland” is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, nursery, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor, and without intolerable soil erosion. Prime farmland includes land that possesses the above characteristics but is being used currently to produce livestock and timber. It does not include land already in or committed to urban development or water storage.

Farmlands Criteria

(continued)

2. “Unique farmland” is land other than prime farmland that is used for production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, as determined by the United States Secretary of Agriculture. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high quality or high yields of specific crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.
3. “Important farmland” other than prime or unique farmland is land that is of statewide or local importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, nursery, oilseed or other agricultural crops, as determined by the appropriate state agency or local government agency, either or both, and that the United States Secretary of Agriculture determines should be considered as farmland for the purposes of this chapter

Farmlands Criteria

(continued)

- Size of parcel in relation to average agricultural parcel sizes in the locality will also be a determining factor (10 points)
- The agricultural significance of the land within the area in which it is located (8 points)
- The presence of any significant adjacent agricultural land that is in agricultural production or is not now in active agriculture (10 points)
- The vulnerability rank for the parcel as determined by the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment model (Urban Fringe model) (15 points)

Farmlands Criteria

(continued)

- The use of Best Management Practices on the farm (4 points)
- Support for the project evidenced in local farmland protection policies (agricultural zoning, agricultural and forestal districts, use value taxation, etc.) (4 points)
- The environmental benefits of retaining the land in agricultural uses (4 points)

Category I: Land Evaluation

Soil Productivity (25 points)

Using soil classes prime, unique or important farmland, score the percentage of project land in each soils class.

Value the soils classified as Prime.

Value the soils classified Unique.

Value the soils classified as Important Farmland.

Parcel Size (10 points)

Using data from the most recent Census of Agriculture, score the size of the farm as it compares to the average sized farm in the locality.

Category II: Land Use (45 points)

- A. 1) Is the land currently being farmed;
2) Is this a Century Farm?

Maximum score 8 points

- B. To what degree is the land adjacent to or in close proximity to other preserved lands, either in agriculture production or non-active in farming?

Maximum score 10 points

- C. What is the vulnerability rank for this parcel as determined by the Urban Fringe VLCNA model?

Maximum score 15 points

Category II (continued)

D. To what extent are Best Management Practices (BMPs) being used/implemented in the normal operation of this farm? Please define.

Maximum score 4 points

E. Is the project supported by local farmland protection policies (agricultural zoning, agricultural and forestal districts, use value taxation, etc.)?

Maximum score 4 points

F. To what degree will preserving the proposed land in agricultural use secure environmental benefits?

Maximum score 4 points